B. Social Role

596 562 769 The principal social function of the family in China was the bearing, rearing, and training of children. Sons were more highly valued than daughters, becuase only the former remained with the family after marriage, contributing to its labor and income, and only sons could perpetuate the family and perform the yearly rites in honor of the father and the family ancestors after the father's death. Implicit in the ceremony was the idea that the ancestors had a life afte death, watched over the family's fortune, and were comforted by the periodic ministrations of the family. For the living, the rites provided an occasion for awe and respect during which the continuity of the family over time was reemphasized and the solidarity and duties of the family unit in the present reasserted.

The veneration of ancestors was so important to Chinese society that the absence of sons to carry on the yearly observances was regarded as a major failing on the responsible male's part and a tremendous catastrope for the family. Concubinage and adoption were socially and legally sanctioned as means of providingsons, if marriage produced only daughters or no children at all. Because of the necessity of providing against a high death rate, the premium on sons resulted in over-population, only partly offset by a high rate of female infanticide.

554 561 596 Just as sex, age, and generation determined an individual's status within the family, so did

2; Rock K-5 (1934-) 1947 AF16 Southwest China

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532

PLATE 49.—THE ANCESTRAL TABLET OF YANG SHEN

[p. 108 A]

3: Hutson M-5 (no date) 1921 AF16 Southwest China AF16

Another account says they were written by 漢班超 *Han Pan chao*, also of the Han dynasty. Both men may have done it, but the former story is the more generally believed.

The writing of a family altar tablet is an important matter with many people. The wisest and most learned man available is asked to write it; he puts on his best official robes and breathes upon his pencil to give life to it and to the tablet.

The ancient ancestral tablet 門中歷代高曾遠祖位 *mên chung li tai kao tsêng yüan tsu wei*, has largely been ousted by the Heaven and Earth tablet; but some scholars still use it because they consider Heaven and Earth are only to be worshipped by the emperor. The ancestral tablet is only written to three generations next to the living head of the family, but in all, eighteen are included, nine ascending generations and nine descending. The nine dead are named, 鼻祖 *pi tsu*, nose ancestor, or first ancestor; so called because the nose is the part supposed to be first conceived is the womb; 2, *yüan* 遠 or distant, 3, *t'ai* 太 great; 4, *lieh* 烈 illustrious; 5, *t'ien* 天 heavenly; 6, *kao* 高 high; each of these adjectives being joined to *tsu*, ancestor; the deceased great-grandfather, grandfather and father are respectively 7, *tsêng tsu* 曾祖, 8, *tsu kung* 祖公 and 9, *hsien k'ao* 顯考. The nine descending generations are the son, called *nan* 男, and the rest are *sun* 孫 grandson combined with the following adjectives: *sü* 祀, *hsüan* 玄, *lai* 來, *k'un* 昆, *jêng* 祁, *yün* 雲, and *êrh* 耳; the last name being again on the supposition that the ear is the latest member formed.

These eighteen generations come within the scope of the family altar. Sometimes, for brevity, *pi tsu* represents the ancestors and *êrh sun* the posterity.

Thus in ancestral worship prayer is made to the departed heads of the family for a long continuation of the line; this is spoken of as 香煙灰不斷 *hsiang lu hui pu tuan*, to perpetuate the ashes in the incense pot. There can be no greater insult than to empty out the ashes from the incense urn; and for fear of this being done many old people will not permit the family altar to be touched by anyone.

To obtain sons they make pilgrimages to distant shrines; a man on changing his residence invokes the spirits of his

3: Hutson M-5 (no date) 1921 AF16 Southwest China AF16

ancestors to follow him. Everything pertaining to idolatry may be given up easily, but ancestor worship only with great difficulty. Some have pretended to be without a family altar, while they have still been continuing the worship in a secluded part of the house. This is the kernel of the religion of the Chinese; fear of the displeasure of departed ancestors is very real, and no expense is spared to make their spirits rest in peace.

The idea of transmigration or rather rotation of souls seems to be found in this altar, and the *tzŭ p'ai* 子派 of the family bears this out. Most families use only sixteen names; but some have thirty-two and a few have twenty-four; when these have run their course the round begins afresh, and the spirits of ancestors are probably supposed to do the same.

The furniture in the chief room in the house does not belong to any individual member of the family, but is attached to the family altar and is family property.

A tablet to three classes of religions is not uncommon, and in some homes it takes the place of the Heaven and Earth tablet. It includes (1) 上三教 *shang san chiao*, the upper three religions, viz.—Confucius 儒教孔聖 *ju chiao K'ung shêng*; the Taoist Sage 道教老君 *tao chiao Lao chün*; Buddha, 釋教牟尼 *Shih chiao mu ni*. (2) *Chung* 中 *san chiao*, the middle three religions: the god of Literature 文昌帝君 Wên Ch'ang ti chün; the god of War 銀闕大帝 Yin ch'üeh ta ti; the god of dark Heaven 玄天上帝 hsüan t'ien shang ti. (3) *Hsia* 下 *san chiao*, the lower three religions: the god of Medicine 藥王菩薩 Yo wang p'u sa; the goddess of Mercy 觀音大士 Kuan Yin ta shih; the god of cattle Niu 牛 wang p'u sa.

On this tablet there is also written 歷代昭穆 *li tai chao mu*, to the ancestors far and near.

At the outer left hand side of the door as one enters a house may be seen an idol or tablet to the Taoist trinity, 三品三元三官大帝 *san p'in san yüan san kuan ta ti*. The worshipper bows to the outside as he is supposed to be worshipping heaven. The idol is generally a painting about a foot square.

769 Ancestor worship is institutionalized to an amazing extent. Not only the very large and wealthy families and clans but also the ordinary well-to-do ones have a separate ancestral temple. All go to great lengths and expenses to ensure good sites for family graveyards according to geomancy. In order to make sure that the fortune of the family will be on the up all the time it is the custom to change graveyards to new sites when the old ones have become suspect. Old imperial honors granted from Peking have been and are still highly valued. Walking through the town and its villages one senses upon numerous plaques of honor on the portals to many family houses.

249 Not many years ago, before the advent of the power of the Central Government into the province, opium growing was general. George B. Crossey prints in his book, China's Geographical Foundations (1934) a photograph showing "Fields of Opium Poppy Outside the Walls of Yunnan-fu" (Kunming). This sight is no longer common today, especially in the more communicable parts. In the remoter interior of the province, the author has been told, opium is still being grown. Opium smoking is certainly very widespread everywhere in the province. Opium-growing in this town and its satellite villages was formerly the source of income for many families, and the trading of the commodity has enabled many families to become wealthy, indeed. The prohibition of its plantation has caused many small farmers to sigh about the passed "golden age," but has not prevented the wealthy families from making even more profit out of the now scarcer supply. These facts have at least been partly responsible for the wealth of West Town.

556 West Town contains a disporportionately large number of wealthy families. These families are not mere local stars. They are rather outstanding even in the larger provincial cities and in Kunming. One year ago the top of these families performed a funeral that lasted over two months and cost about one million national dollars. Even the lesser ones are also considerable. Soon after the fabulous funeral the wedding of the young master of a small one-room cloth store in the town cost ten thousand national dollars while the wages of laborers in the town were still about two or three dollars a day with board.

556 178 743 871 This wealth has perhaps given rise to the over-emphasis on the ancient ways as regards imperial honors, ancestor worship and sexual differences. But in recent years a few wealthy families have also supported in the town three schools, a hospital and a public library. The hospital has about twenty beds, one graduate nurse, two medical officers (both M.D.'s, one was trained in Peiping Union Medical College), a number of assistant nurses and a nursing training class. It has arrangement for free medicine and hospitalization for the poor. The schools are: one middle school, one primary school divided into two parts, and one normal school. The three schools combined have a total enrollment of about 1,400. The first and second schools are co-educational. The principal of the middle school is a local man who has studied in Ta'ing Hua University, Peiping.

Influences from Outside

491 492 205 Before the days of the Burma Road, motor transportation was scarcely known to this region and communication with Kunming took about two or three weeks one way. After the opening of the Burma Road the town was soon connected with the Road by a sort of badly constructed highway. But the principal mode of travelling is still pack horses and "chairs" (Hua Kan). Since about two years ago there has been a third-class post office receiving mail from Kunming once in two days.